

## LA-UR-21-25644

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Title: First atomic weapons following WWII were detonated 75 years ago  
Operation Crossroads kicks off era of testing Los Alamos-created  
weapons

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Intended for: Web

Issued: 2021-06-15

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## **First atomic weapons following WWII were detonated 75 years ago Operation Crossroads kicks off era of testing Los Alamos-created weapons**

By Roger Meade, Historian, Nuclear and Radiochemistry (C-NR), and the [National Security Research Center](#) staff

It was time to test.

After the Los Alamos-created atomic bombs helped [end World War II](#), the no-longer-secret Lab transitioned into an era of weapons testing, starting 75 years ago with Operation Crossroads with the goal of studying nuclear weapons' effects on warships.

In August 1945, U.S. Senator Brien McMahon, who later authored the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, said: "In order to test the destructive powers of the atomic bomb against naval vessels, I would like to see these (Japanese naval) ships taken to sea and an atomic bomb dropped on them. The resulting explosion should prove to us just how effective the atomic bomb is when used against the giant naval ships."

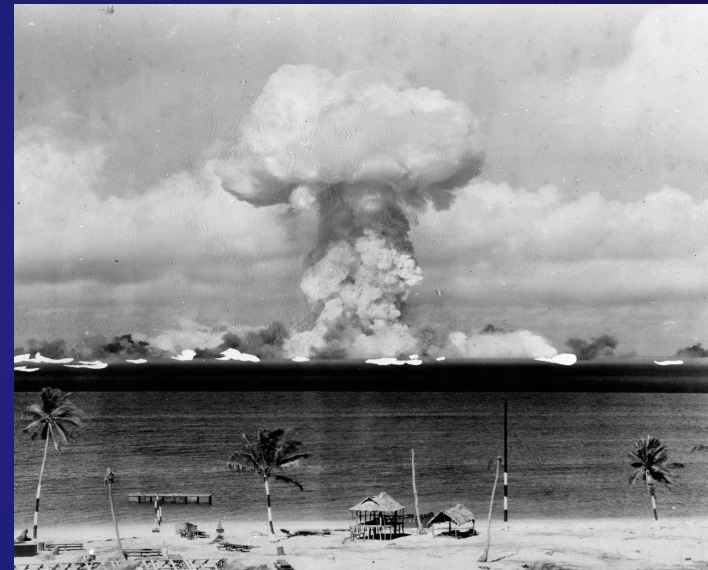
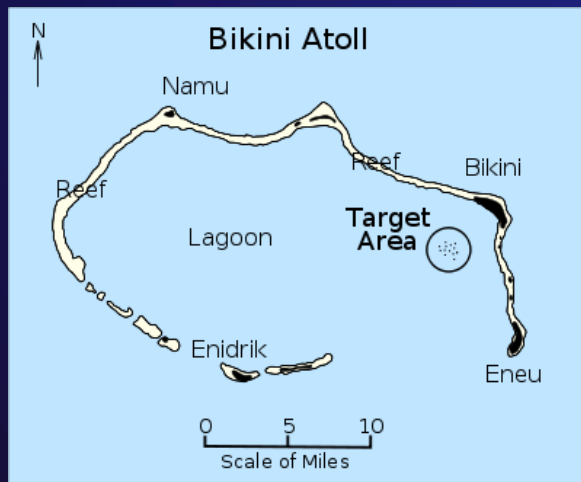
As such, Crossroads took place less than a year later in the Pacific at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. It was made up of two tests:

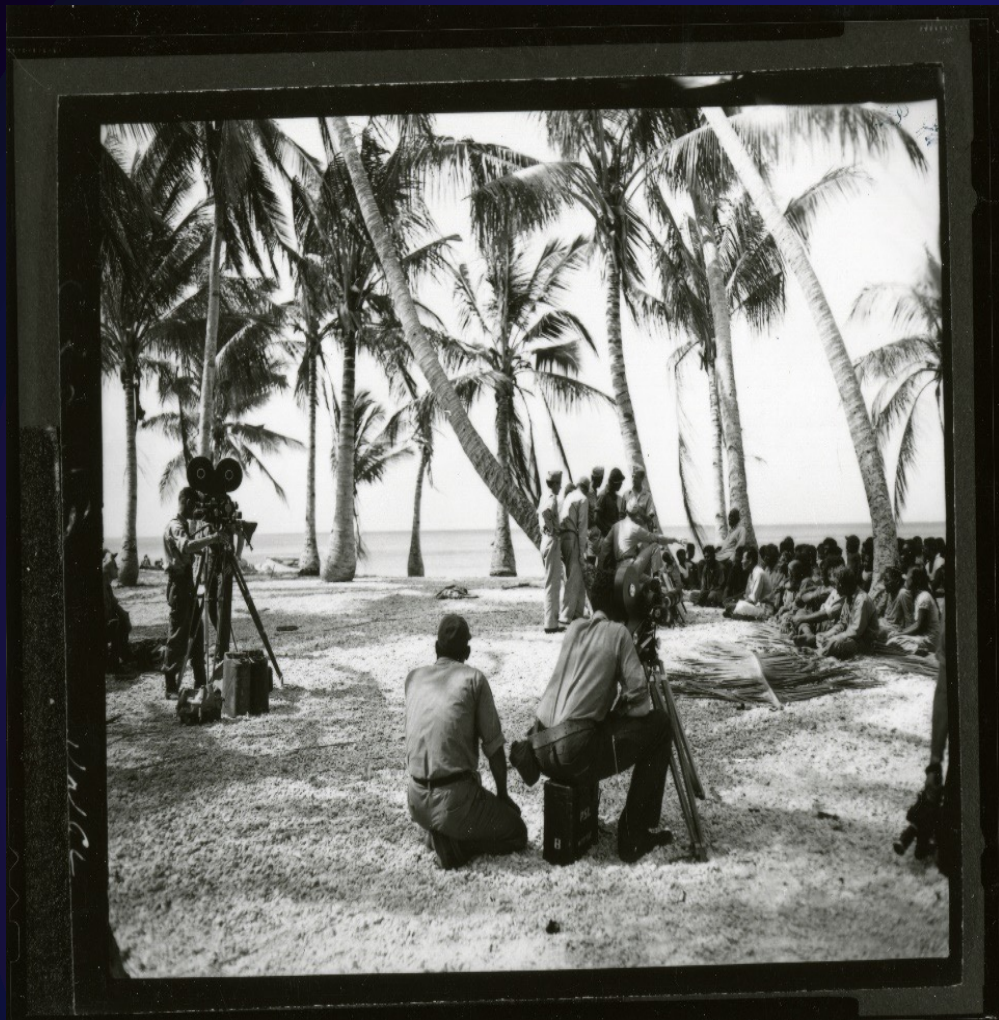
- The Able test took place on June 30, 1946, with the detonation of the atomic bomb nicknamed Gilda, after the movie character played by actress Rita Hayworth.
- The Baker test was conducted almost a month later on July 25, with the detonation of Helen of Bikini. It was the first underwater test of an atomic bomb.

Both devices were Fat Man-type weapons, which was the plutonium implosion bomb first detonated during the [Trinity test](#) and then weeks later above Nagasaki, Japan.

More than 40,000 personnel participated in Crossroads; Los Alamos sent 149 scientists and engineers to assemble and arm the two atomic bombs.

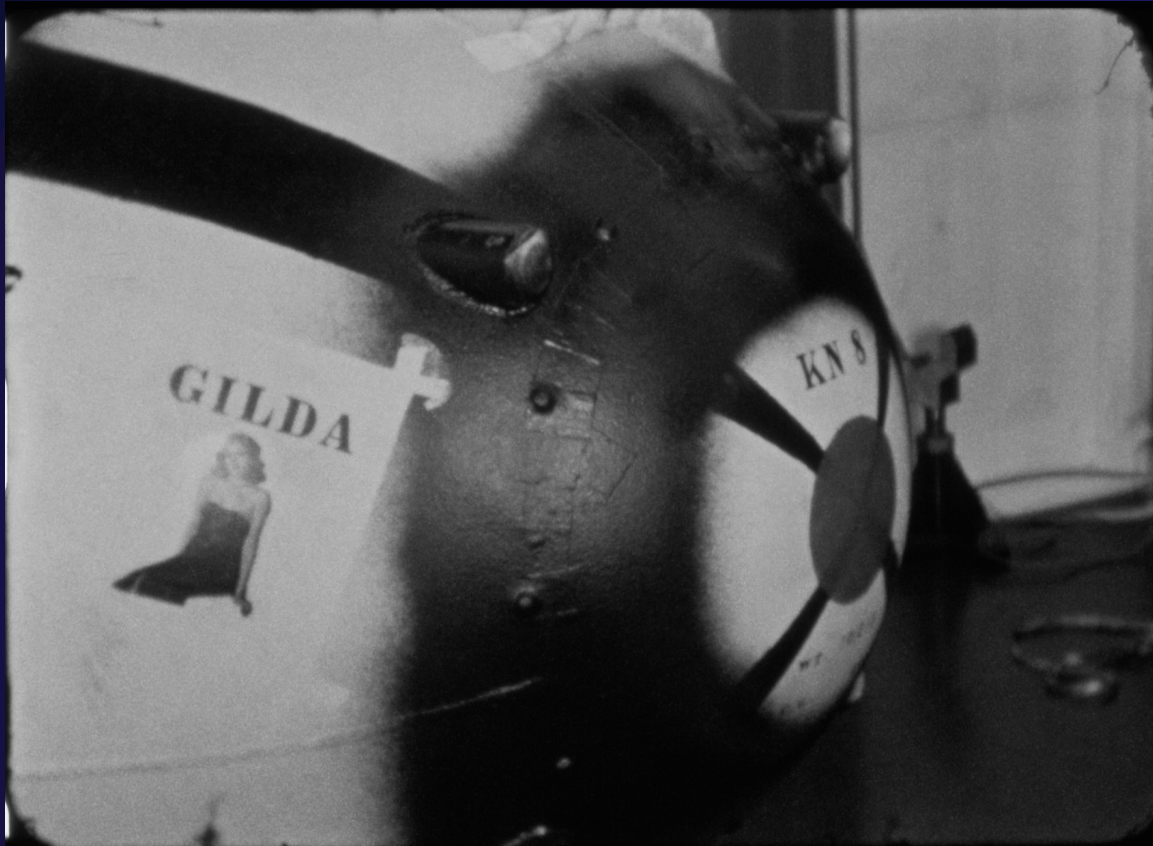
The collections in the National Security Research Center, which is the Lab's classified library and also houses unclassified artifacts, include these images and [footage](#) from Operation Crossroads.



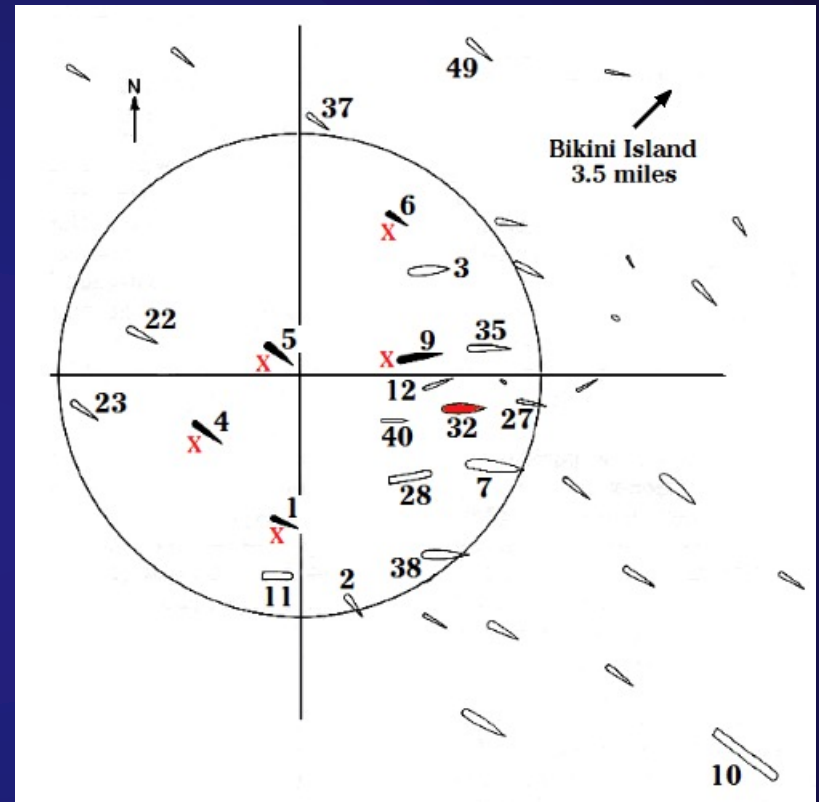
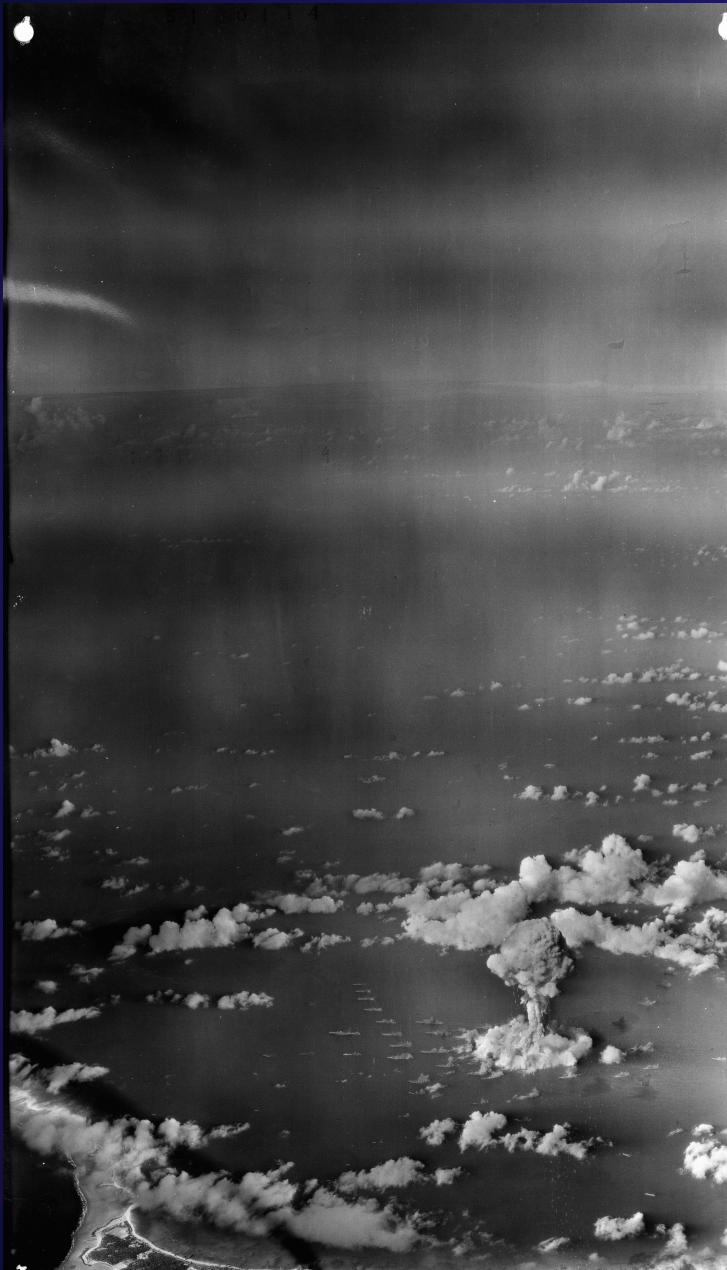
















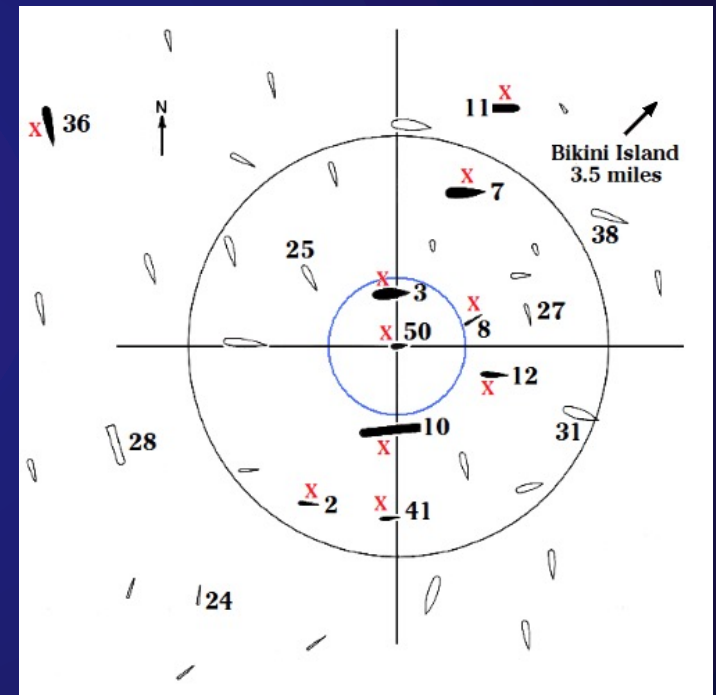
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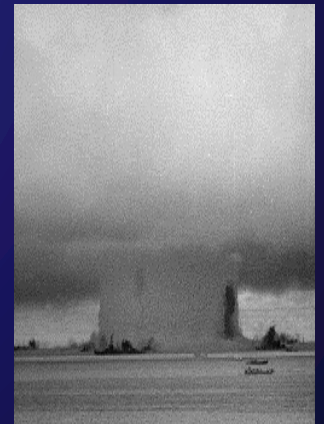
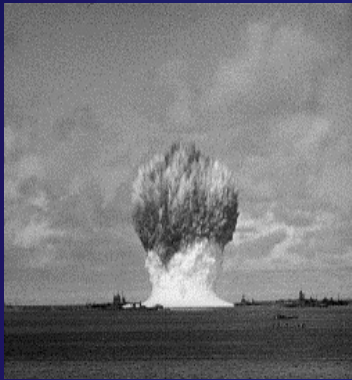


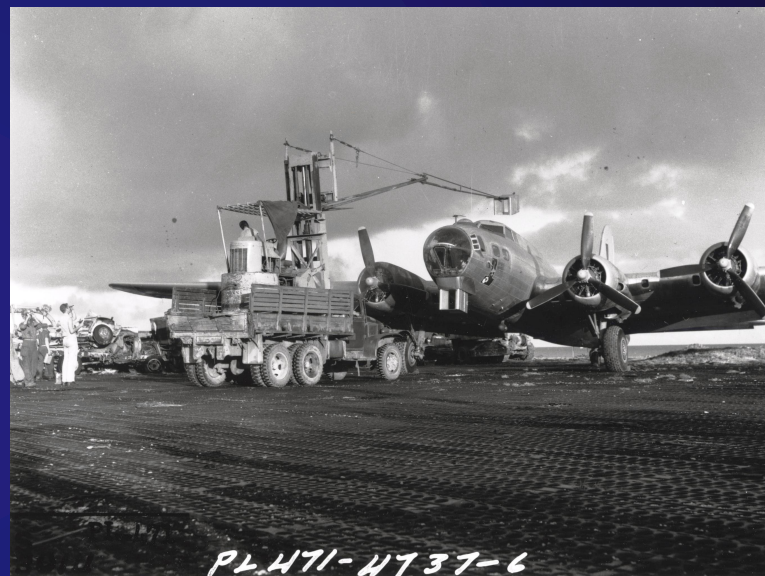


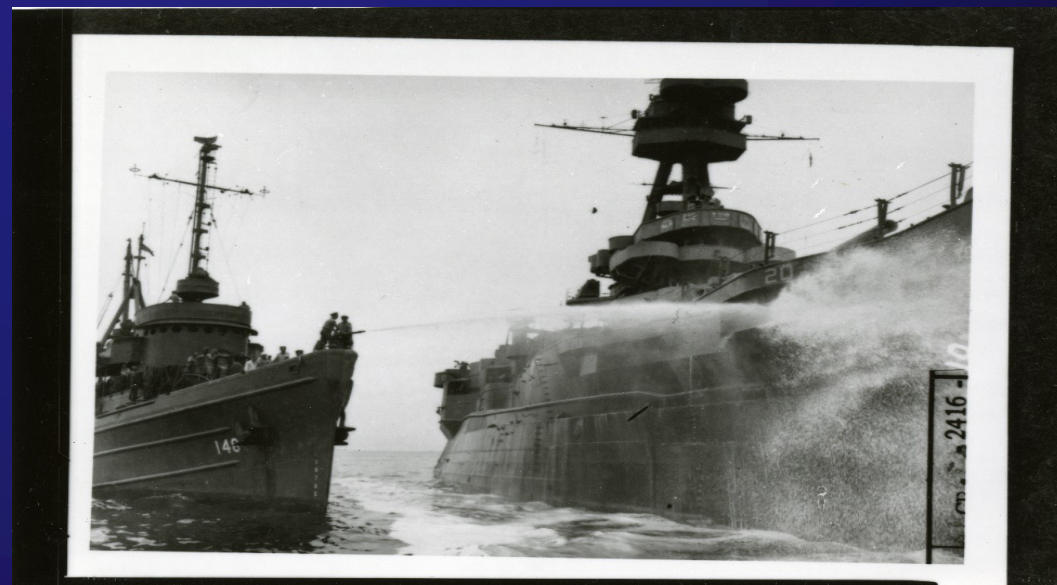
















# SIDEBAR / BREAKOUT BOX:

What's that dark spot?

